NCA
VOC FOR IOP/FN
NEWS ANALYSIS 1-0114 FEBRUARY 6, 1976
RUSSELL DYBVIK

MILITARY BUDGET DEBATE

ANNCR:

THE LARGEST DEFENSE BUDGET IN AMERICAN HISTORY -- MORE THAN ONE HUNDRED THOUSAND MILLION DOLLARS -- HAS BEEN SENT TO THE CONGRESS. PREDICTABLY, IT HAS COME UNDER ATTACK FOR BEING TOO HIGH, AND HAS BEEN PRAISED FOR BEING REALISTIC. SUCH DEBATE IS AN ANNUAL AFFAIR, BUT AS NEWS ANALYST RUSSELL DYBVIK POINTS OUT, THE DEBATE IS SOMEWHAT MORE INTENSE THIS YEAR.

VOICE:

IN THE PAST, MANY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS HAVE ROUTINELY ASSUMED THAT MILITARY PLANNERS EXPECTED CONGRESS TO GIVE THEM LESS THAN THEY ASKED FOR, AND THAT THEY ALLOWED FOR SUCH A CUTBACK IN MAKING UP THEIR ORIGINAL BUDGET REQUEST. THIS YEAR, SAY DEFENSE OFFICIALS, THERE IS NO "FAT" -- EVERYTHING IN THE BUDGET IS NEEDED. THIS CLAIM ALREADY IS BEING MET WITH SOME SCEPTICISM, AND THE BATTLE -- OR AT LEAST THE DEBATE -- IS JOINED. AND BECAUSE IT IS A PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION YEAR, THE ARGUMENTS MAY BE MORE INTENSE THAN USUAL.

PRESIDENT FORD, REPUBLICAN CHALLENGER RONALD REAGAN AND DEMOCRATIC CONTENDER, SENATOR HENRY JACKSON ALL HAVE SPOKEN OUT STRONGLY FOR CONTINUED MILITARY STRENGTH. OTHERS, INCLUDING SOME DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATES, SAY LESS MONEY SHOULD BE SPENT ON THE MILITARY, AND MORE ON OTHER PROGRAMS.

THE BUDGET REQUESTED FOR THE NEW FISCAL YEAR CALLS FOR THE FIRST REAL INCREASE IN AMERICAN DEFENSE SPENDING IN MANY YEARS -- ESSENTIAL, IF THE UNITED STATES IS NOT TO BE SURPASSED BY GROWING SOVIET MILITARY MIGHT.

FOR MANY YEARS, THE SOVIETS HAVE STEADILY INCREASED THEIR DEFENSE SPENDING IN REAL TERMS -- WHILE AMERICAN DEFENSE SPENDING HAS DIMINISHED IN REAL -- OR CONSTANT DOLLARS. THE RESULT IS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE ATTAINED ESSENTIAL EQUIVALENCE WITH THE UNITED STATES. AMONG OTHER THINGS, AMERICAN MILITARY MANPOWER IS NOW AT ITS LOWEST LEVEL SINCE BEFORE WOULD WAR TWO, BUT IN THE PAST TEN YEARS, SECRETARY RUMSFELD REPORTED TO CONGRESS, THE SOVIETS HAVE EXPANDED THEIR MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT BY ONE MILLION MEN. (OPT) SOVIET INTERCONTINENTAL BALLISTIC MISSILES HAVE INCREASED FROM TWO HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR TO SIXTEEN HUNDRED...THE NUMBER OF SEA-LAUNCHED SOVIET BALLISTIC MISSILES HAS RISEN FROM TWENTY-NINE TO SEVEN HUNDRED THIRTY...AND SIGNIFICANT QUALITATIVE IMPROVEMENTS, INCLUDING FOUR NEW INTERCONTINENTAL MISSILES AND A NEW GENERATION OF MISSILE SUBMARINES HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED BY THE SOVIETS -- ALL DURING THE PAST DECADE. (END OPT)

WHILE AMERICAN NUCLEAR AND CONVENTIONAL FORCES ARE STILL ADEQUATE FOR THEIR MISSIONS OF DETERRENCE AND DEFENSE, SECRETARY RUMSFELD SAYS CONFIDENCE IN THE FUTURE ADEQUACY OF OUR FORCE STRUCTURE IS GRADUALLY DECLINING. HE SAYS IT IS NOW TIME TO HALT THIS TREND.

ACTUALLY, DEFENSE SPENDING HAS BECOME PART OF THE WHOLE SPECTRUM OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS WHICH IS COMING UNDER INCREASING DEBATE.

ALREADY TOUGH RHETORIC IS CERTAIN TO SHARPEN -- IN CONGRESS, IN THE MEDIA, AND ON THE ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN TRAIL. HOWEVER, SECRETARY OF STATE (HENRY) KISSINGER THIS WEEK

PROVIDED A PERSPECTIVE FOR THE DEBATE. HE TOLD A SAN FRANCISCO AUDIENCE THAT THE SOVIET-AMERICAN MILITARY BALANCE FORMS THE VERY BASIS FOR OVERALL DETENTE AND FOR THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES, TOGETHER WITH THE ABSOLUTE NECESSITY OF AVOIDING NECLEAR WAR.

(OPT) TODAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR HISTORY, HE SAID, WE FACE THE STARK REALITY THAT THE CHALLENGE IS UNENDING -- THAT THERE IS NO EASY, AND SURELY NO FINAL ANSWER -- THAT THERE ARE NO AUTOMATIC SOLUTIONS. THIS, SAID SECRETARY KISSINGER, IS A NEW EXPERIENCE FOR AMERICANS, AND IT PROMPTS A NOSTALGIA FOR A SIMPLER PAST. (END OPT)

IT IS CERTAIN THE FORD ADMINISTRATION WILL PRESS HARD FOR MAINTAINING A STRONG AMERICAN MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT. AND THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WILL JUST AS SURELY ADD A NEW DIMENSION TO THIS IMPORTANT NATIONAL DEBATE.

GH/LP